



Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Don't Let Holiday Decorations Deal A Deadly Blow



'Tis the season of giving, as the old saying goes. However, giving the fire department extra work during the holidays, does not make the top of anyone's list.

We urge all families to take precautions this holiday season as they begin to decorate their homes. You can enjoy a safe and happy holiday by following fire safety tips regarding Christmas trees, holiday lighting and other holiday decorations.

Each year hospital emergency rooms treat over 8,000 people for injuries, such as falls, cuts and shock related to holiday lights, decorations and Christmas trees. In addition, Christmas trees are involved in more than 400 fires annually, resulting in 30 deaths, 90 injuries and an average of more than \$17 million in property loss and damage.

By practicing prudent fire prevention and safety habits, you can prevent accidents that could ruin this special time of year.

Side Stepping Tree Hazards

By the time some Christmas trees reach their sales location, they could be several weeks old. Old Christmas trees present very significant fire hazards and will burn with great intensity.

When selecting a tree, check closely to pick a tree that has been freshly cut. This can be accomplished by checking the needles on the tree.

Trees should be green and supple and should not break when you bend them and the trunk will be sticky to the touch. You can also tap the trunk on the ground, if the needles fall off the tree is old and dry and will present a very serious fire hazard to your family.

Even a fresh tree should only be left up for approximately two weeks and must be continuously watered.

If you choose to purchase an artificial Christmas tree, you should check the label to ensure it is fire resistant. This does not mean that the tree won't catch fire but it will resist burning and will extinguish quickly.

Regardless of what type of tree you choose you should be careful where you place it in your home. Place your tree well away from fireplaces, heaters and areas of traffic, and never block your exit routes.

Whether you are installing indoor or outdoor lights, ensure they have a label bearing the name of a recognized testing laboratory such as U.L. or F.M., which is an indicator of conformance with safety standards.

Preventing a Lighting Inferno

Check each set of lights - old or new - for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires or loose connections. Discard damaged sets.

Metallic Christmas trees should have indirect light only. Placing electric lights on metallic trees present an electrocution hazard.

Carefully fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls or other firm support to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples to hold strings of lights in place, not nails or tacks.

Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house.

When Decorations Become Kindling

For other holiday decorations ensure they are noncombustible or flame-resistant.

Chose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded materials. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.

Never use lighted candles on trees or near other evergreens or combustibles. Always use noncombustible holders and place candles where they won't be knocked over.

In homes with small children take special precautions to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. Keeping trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children will help prevent a child from swallowing or inhaling small pieces.

Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.

MOST OF ALL - HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON